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ROMANIA: Challenges to Ruling Front Mounting

The National Salvation Front (FSN) no longer can disguise its lack of credibility and internal divisions; it appears headed for a major confrontation with anxious, angry opposition groups this weekend, both at the roundtable talks that begin today and at the demonstrations called by the major parties for tomorrow. After several protests against the Front's decision to run in the May general election, President Iliescu acknowledged Thursday that the political situation is unstable, warning that anarchy would result if the provisional government were to collapse. Several leading FSN members, including Vice President Mazilu, have resigned this week, and the government appears to be losing control over some local governments, including the western city of Timisoara where the anti-Ceausescu uprising started.

Comment: Just a month after seizing power, the Front is struggling to hold on in the face of increasing pressure from anti-Communist opposition groups, students, and workers. Unable to shake off suspicions that it is hijacking the popular revolution, the self-appointed leadership has tightened restrictions on demonstrations—but 600 were able to protest without incident in central Bucharest last night—and is seeking to exploit latent fears of possible anarchy and Hungarian irredentism in Transylvania.

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